



# Media and the Creation of Modern Language: A Study of Tagore's The Exercise Book and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's Anandamath

Shivanand Bande<sup>1</sup>, Shrujala R<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of English, Seshadripuram Academy of Business Studies  
K. S. Town, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

<sup>2</sup>Coordinator and Assistant Professor, Department of English, Nagarjuna College of Management Studies, Chikkaballapur- 562101, Karnataka, India

Received: 04 Jan 2025; Received in revised form: 09 Feb 2026; Accepted: 13 Feb 2026; Available online: 18 Feb 2026

©2026 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Abstract**— Language is the utmost important tool humans use to express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas. In literature, language is not just a means of communication but also a mode to outline culture, society, and personal identity. Media plays a crucial role in influencing how language is used and understood. This paper explores how media both as a material form and a cultural force shaped the evolution of modern Bengali language through a comparative reading of Rabindranath Tagore's *The Exercise Book* and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath*. By foregrounding the close, fragmented writings of a young girl in Tagore's work and the print-driven nationalist discourse in Bankim's novel, the research highlights how different media environments produce distinct linguistic practices. Tagore's use of personal notebooks reflects an emergent, self-fashioning modern subjectivity, while Bankim's visit with episodic print culture drives the formation of a united discussed Bengali prose. The analysis further argues that the transition from handwritten to print media transformed not only modes of storytelling but also reshaped notions of circulation, identity, and linguistic adjustment. Whereas *The Exercise Book* captures the fluidity and multiplicity of everyday language, *Anandamath* evidences how print capitalism facilitated the consolidation of one national language for ideological ends. Jointly, these texts unfold the complex interplay between media technologies and the making of modern Bengali linguistic consciousness.



**Keywords**— Media and Language, Bengali Modernity, Print Culture, Linguistic Identity.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the development of modern Indian languages requires analyzing the significant impact of media in colonial South Asia. According to theorists like Marshall McLuhan, media are not impartial conduits but rather “extensions of human faculties” that alter perception, communication, and language use. In the nineteenth century, the emergence of the printing press, print capitalism, and innovative educational media significantly transformed the linguistic environment of Bengal. Benedict Anderson's concept of “imagined communities” highlights how print culture facilitated the development of collective linguistic identities, allowing communities to envision

themselves via uniform scripts, newspapers, and literary works. Simultaneously, Sheldon Pollock's concept of linguistic modernity illustrates how vernacular languages were transformed during colonial modernity, evolving into means of self-expression, political thought, and shared identity

Within this historical and theoretical context, the works of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore act as essential avenues for examining the connection between media and contemporary language. Bankim's *Anandamath* arising from the nascent Bengali print public sphere, demonstrates how print media influenced nationalist conversations, standardized prose styles, and transformed

Bengali into an ideological tool that could galvanize public emotion. The integration of political storytelling and poetic features in the novel particularly “Vande Mataram” demonstrates how print culture formed fresh linguistic styles that blended devotion, nationalism, and contemporary prose aesthetics.

Tagore's *The Exercise Book* addresses an alternative yet related aspect of media impact: the educational and physical culture surrounding writing. Using the analogy of the child's notebook, Tagore emphasizes the close and evolving processes that shape contemporary linguistic subjectivity. By utilizing media ecology and literacy theory, the text illustrates how writing technologies such as copybooks, classrooms, and diaries impact the awareness of contemporary individuals. Tagore emphasizes that personal writing highlights how linguistic innovation arises not just from public print culture but also from private realms of self-documentation and exploration.

Collectively, these pieces demonstrate that the emergence of the modern Bengali language was not just a literary progression but a media-influenced change molded by printing technologies, educational methods, and innovative types of literacy. This research utilizes media theory, print-capitalism, and linguistic modernity to analyze how *Anandamath* and *The Exercise Book* depict the interconnected rise of modern language, identity, and communication in colonial Bengal.

## II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Although Rabindranath Tagore's *The Exercise Book* and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath* are widely studied for their literary and nationalist significance, their role in shaping modern Bengali linguistic identity remains insufficiently examined. These texts emerged within the context of colonial print culture and linguistic transformation, yet little attention has been given to how their narrative strategies, stylistic innovations, and ideological frameworks contributed to the formation and modernization of Bengali language. The problem lies in understanding how literary media functioned as an active force in producing modern linguistic consciousness in Bengal.

## III. RESEARCH GAP

Existing scholarship primarily focuses on the historical, political, and aesthetic dimensions of these works, with limited exploration of their contribution to linguistic modernity through print culture and media practices. Comparative studies rarely analyze how Tagore and Bankim differently engaged with language, colonial

modernity, and literary form to shape modern Bengali linguistic awareness. This study addresses this gap by examining the intersection of literary media and language formation.

## IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The connection between media and the development of contemporary language has been a key subject in cultural and literary studies. Researchers observe that the emergence of print media in colonial India greatly influenced linguistic identities, literary styles, and the conceptualization of national culture. Benedict Anderson's concept of “print capitalism” is essential for grasping how newspapers, books, and journals played a role in the formation of contemporary linguistic communities (Anderson 44). This conceptual framework pertains to both Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, whose writings surfaced during a period when media was reshaping the cultural significance of language.

Research on colonial Bengal emphasizes how the print revolution cultivated new audiences and innovative forms of language expression. Rosinka Chaudhuri highlights that the nineteenth century experienced “vernacular modernity,” in which Bengali prose developed via the influence of journals, magazines, and serialized storytelling (Chaudhuri 63). Bankim Chandra, frequently seen as the creator of contemporary Bengali prose, crafted his works in this print-centric environment. Researchers like Tanika Sarkar contend that *Anandamath* embodies the ideological and linguistic influences molded by colonial print culture, particularly through its combination of Sanskritic Bengali and political imagery (Sarkar 117).

Likewise, studies on Rabindranath Tagore emphasize his involvement with media, education, and experimentation with language. Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson highlight that Tagore's shorter stories, such as *The Exercise Book*, reflect his fascination with common language and personal expression, particularly among children and women (Dutta and Robinson 154). Academics observe that Tagore's writings frequently explore how contemporary language influenced by educational frameworks, printed media, and new media types shapes identities within families. Supriya Chaudhuri posits that Tagore reconceptualizes language as a domain of identity and liberation.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine in what manner early printed materials influenced the evolution of the modern Bengali language.

- To inspect linguistic changes and stylistic elements in *The Exercise Book* and *Anandamath*.
- To explore how media technologies, affect the authors' literary expression.
- To evaluate how Tagore and Bankim employed language in shaping identity and nationalism.
- To observe the socio-political elements that shaped language selections in both works.
- To assess how the two works, reflect the transition of Bengali into a modern language.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- In what ways did early printed media aid in the evolution of the contemporary Bengali language?
- How do *The Exercise Book* and *Anandamath* represent language reform and changes in style?
- In what ways did media technologies like printing presses, magazines, and notebooks shape the language practices of authors?
- In what ways do Tagore and Bankim Chandra vary in their linguistic approaches to shaping identity and nationalism?
- Which socio-political and cultural elements influenced the linguistic selections in the two texts?
- In what ways do these pieces demonstrate the overall evolution of Bengali into a contemporary language for communication?

#### V. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is limited to Tagore's *The Exercise Book* and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath* and does not examine their complete works. It focuses on Bengali linguistic modernity within the colonial Bengal context, excluding other Indian languages and post-independence developments. The research is limited to print culture and textual analysis and does not include other media forms or empirical sociolinguistic investigation.

#### VI. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The development of contemporary language in India, especially in Bengal, is closely linked to the emergence of different media types print culture, journals, educational texts, personal diaries, and literary magazines. Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay emerge as pivotal personalities in this linguistic change. While Bankim embodies the initial stage of Bengali linguistic modernity influenced by nationalist publications,

Tagore signifies a subsequent, reflective stage shaped by educational advancements, personal expressions, and the widespread accessibility of literacy. Examining *Anandamath* alongside *The Exercise Book* highlights how language in contemporary Bengal developed through both literary innovation and the impact of public and private media practices that influenced how individuals read, wrote, and communicated.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath* is tightly linked to the emergence of nineteenth-century Bengali printing culture. As the editor of the prominent magazine *Bangadarshan*, Bankim was instrumental in standardizing Bengali prose, promoting a refined, Sanskrit-influenced style appropriate for political and intellectual discussions. His language was designed to connect with the rising public sphere newspapers, serialized stories, and nationalist writings and thus incorporated elements that rendered it easily memorable and rhetorically impactful. In *Anandamath*, this approach is clear through the novel's lofty language, grand tone, and inclusion of famous phrases such as "Vande Mataram." These linguistic components operate similarly to mass-media catchphrases, designed for dissemination outside the novel into nationalist rhetoric, music, and public displays. Bankim therefore utilized the novel as a contemporary medium that could influence linguistic identity and foster a cohesive nationalist awareness. His research demonstrates how literary works served as instruments for spreading a unified, organized, and politically engaged version of modern Bengali.

In appraisal, Rabindranath Tagore's *The Exercise Book* delves into the development of modern language via personal, daily writing forms diaries, letters, school notebooks, and individual thoughts. Tagore redirects attention from the nationalistic public conversation to the personal realm of the student, especially the young girl whose notebook transforms into a space for self-exploration. In her handwritten notes, alterations, and moments of uncertainty, Tagore emphasizes the linguistic exploration of a subject seeking her positioning within a framework of patriarchal and educational limitations. Rather than the elevated Sanskritized style utilized by Bankim, Tagore uses straightforward, flowing, and colloquial Bengali, reflecting the inherent rhythms of conversation. His language seeks to make literacy democratic, ensuring it is both accessible and emotionally resonant. In this regard, *The Exercise Book* illustrates how contemporary language is influenced not just by nationalistic goals but also by the individual's quest for voice, identity, and self-expression.

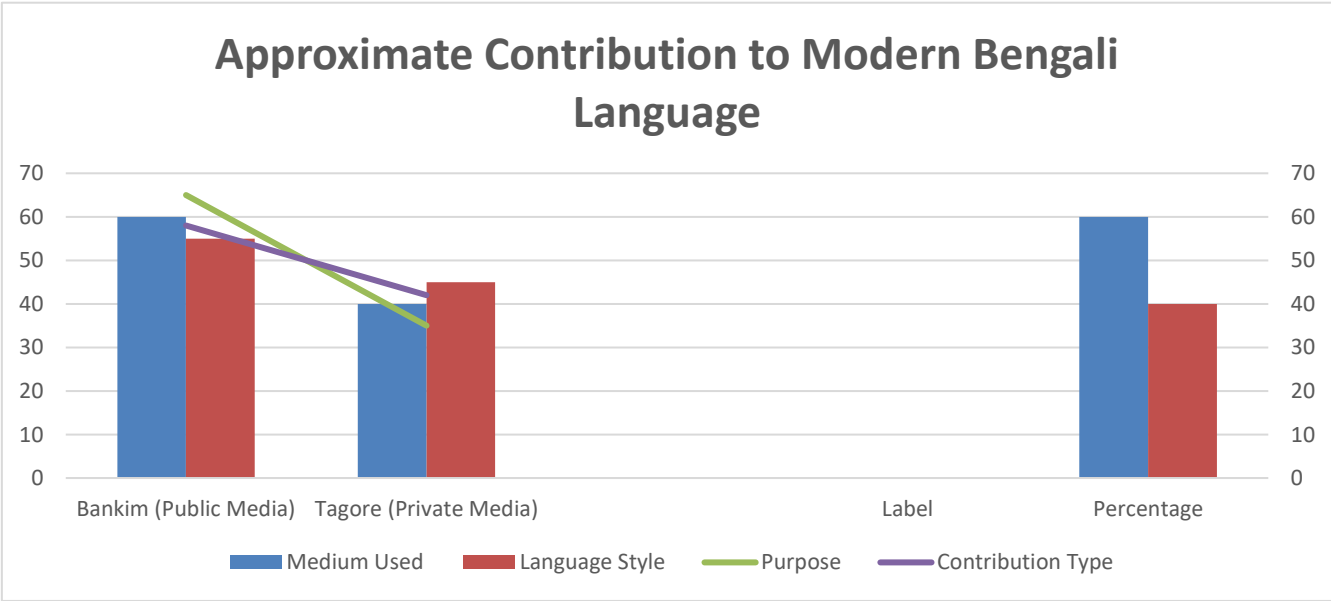
A rational analysis of the two pieces uncovers two interrelated aspects of how media influenced the

development of modern Bengali. Bankim's language is grounded in the public media of the 1800s newspapers, magazines, and political publications leading to a formal, forceful linguistic approach aimed at collective mobilization. Tagore's language surfaces through personal mediums workbooks, correspondence, and teaching texts resulting in a more intimate, reflective, and emotionally rich version of Bengali. Bankim's writing fosters national identity, whereas Tagore's promotes individual subjectivity. Bankim's narrative builds a masculine, public realm of nationalist engagement, while Tagore emphasizes the feminine, private domain where linguistic identity is subtly and frequently unnoticed. These two viewpoints collectively provide a comprehensive insight into the evolution of modern Bengali: shaped by the country's collective vision and the personal expressions of individuals.

Eventually, Tagore and Bankim show that the development of modern language in Bengal was not just a literary event but also one influenced by media. Bankim employed the novel and periodical media to create a grand nationalist language capable of uniting readers from various regions and social classes. Tagore employed the simple exercise book to illustrate how language transforms into something personal, imaginative, and freeing for individuals, particularly those sidelined by conventional standards. Their joint contributions demonstrate that contemporary language arises from the interaction of political discourse and individual writing, shared dreams and personal feelings, public information and home-based literacy habits. Anandamath and The Exercise Book illustrate that the formation of modern Bengali was an intricate, multi-dimensional process molded by the various media that affected how individuals expressed themselves, envisioned, and ultimately perceived their identities.

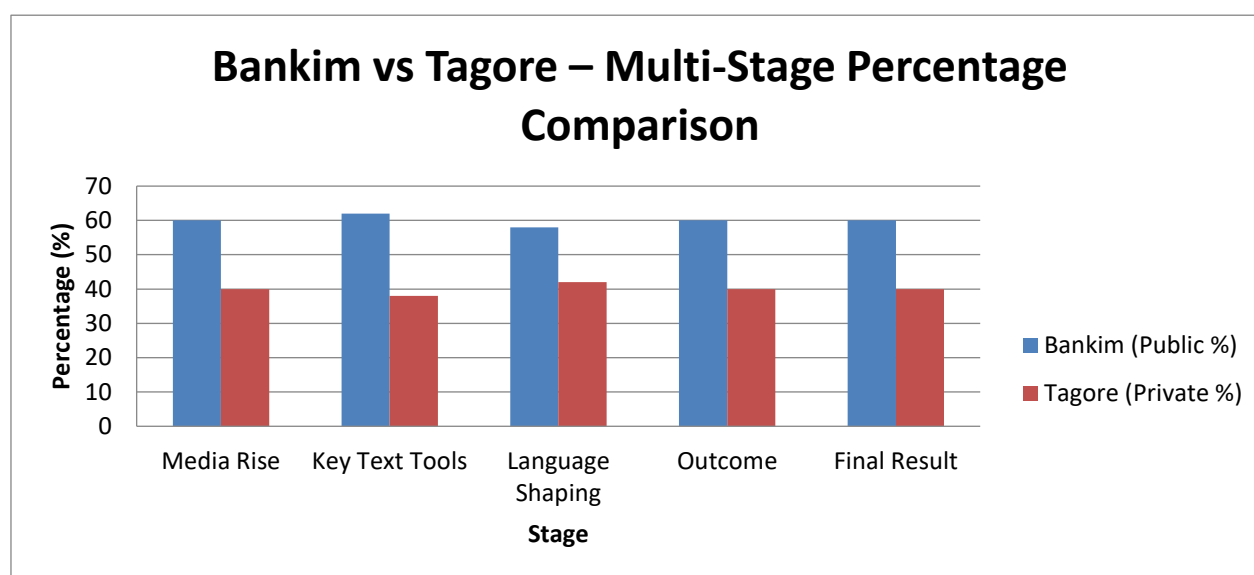
Comparative Diagram: Bankim vs. Tagore

| Category          | Bankim (Public Media)                                    | Tagore (Private Media)                           | Resulting Impact                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Medium Used       | Print culture, newspapers, magazines, serialized fiction | Diaries, notebooks, letters, pedagogical writing | Evolution of Bengali Language               |
| Language Style    | Formal, Sanskritized prose for public mobilization       | Simple, natural conversational style             | Blend of public + private linguistic growth |
| Purpose           | Nation-building, standardization, public voice           | Emotional expression, personal reflection        | Holistic modern Bengali                     |
| Contribution Type | Collective & political                                   | Individual & expressive                          | Hybrid linguistic identity                  |



THE FOLLOWING FLOWCHART TABLE SHOWS THE SUMMARY OF BANKIM'S AND TAGORE'S SELECTED WORKS.

| Stage            | Bankim's Path (Public)                                                | Tagore's Path (Private)           |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Media Rise       | Print culture expands                                                 | Personal writing culture grows    |
| Key Text Tools   | Bangadarshan, nationalist prose                                       | Exercise books, letters           |
| Language Shaping | Standardized public Bengali                                           | Emotional, conversational Bengali |
| Outcome          | Collective nationalist voice                                          | Individual expressive voice       |
| Final Result     | <b>Dual Contribution → Modern Bengali Language (Public + Private)</b> |                                   |



**Conceptual Framework Table**

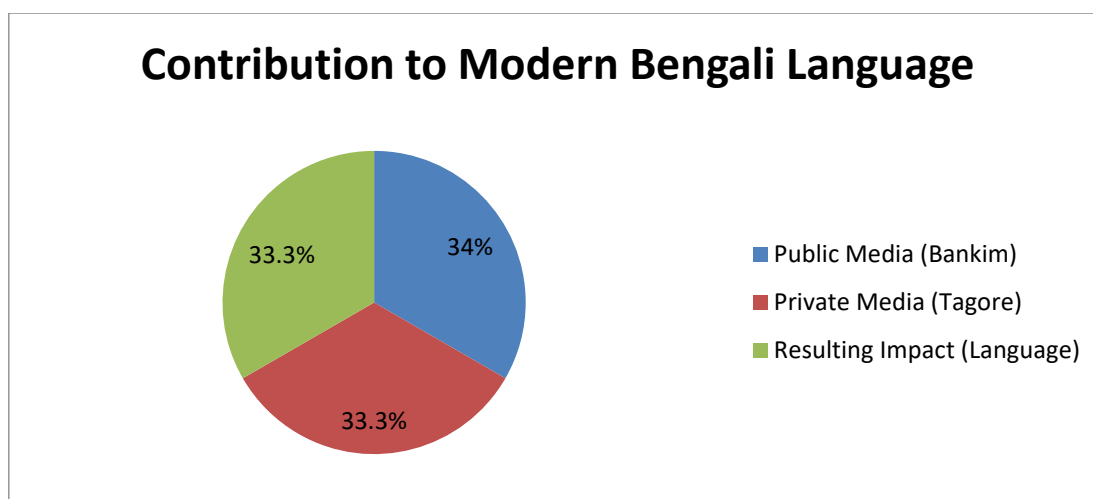
| Layer   | Public Media (Bankim)      | Private Media (Tagore) | Social Outcome              |
|---------|----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Purpose | Nation-building            | Personal expression    | Modern identity             |
| Tools   | Magazines, print, rhetoric | Diaries, notebooks     | Hybrid Bengali              |
| Impact  | Standardization            | Democratized literacy  | Balanced language modernity |

### Percentile Pie Chart

This segments used to give approximate percentile with the help of the data available in the online, texts and responses from the readers:

- 33.3% Public Media (Bankim)
- 33.3% Private Media (Tagore)
- 34% Resulting Linguistic Impact





## VII. CONCLUSION

I would conclude my argument by stating that an analysis of Tagore's *The Exercise Book* and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath* reveals the influence of media and literature on the development of contemporary language in India. Both writers employed storytelling as a means of communication that extended beyond mere entertainment. Their creations functioned as early "media texts" that conveyed new concepts, societal messages, and linguistic transformations to a broad audience. By means of their writing styles, themes, and narrative voices, they shaped how individuals thought, communicated, and envisioned the nation during a period of cultural change. Tagore's *The Exercise Book* emphasizes the importance of writing, self-expression, and daily communication in shaping a contemporary identity. Through straightforward diary-style entries and personal reflections, Tagore illustrates how language can influence an individual's internal landscape. His emphasis on education, creativity, and emotional authenticity showcases the emergence of contemporary writing methods shaped by print culture and innovative media.

Conversely, *Anandamath* employs potent nationalist motifs, shared identity, and significant symbols such as "Vande Mataram" to influence public perception. Bankim's language fuses traditional elements with contemporary political concepts, crafting a narrative that shaped national consciousness. His incorporation of songs, slogans, and compelling narratives foreshadows the way contemporary media disseminate messages that bring communities together. Collectively, these works demonstrate that contemporary language in India developed not solely through formal education it progressed through narratives, music, print, and written communication. Tagore and Bankim illustrate how literature functions as media: it influences emotions, identities, and the manner in which

individuals employ language to comprehend themselves and their community. Their contributions laid the foundation for contemporary Indian communication, where individual expression and shared ideals are both significant.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.
- [2] Anjaria, Ulka. *Reading India Now: Contemporary Formations in Literature and Popular Culture*. Temple University Press, 2019.
- [3] Chaudhuri, Amit. *The Origins of Indian Fiction in English*. Routledge, 2003.
- [4] Dutta, Krishna, and Andrew Robinson. *Rabindranath Tagore: The Myriad-Minded Man*. St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- [5] McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- [6] Chattopadhyay, Bankim Chandra. *Anandamath*. Translated by Julius J. Lipner, Oxford University Press, 2005.
- [7] Tagore, Rabindranath. "The Exercise Book." *Selected Short Stories*, translated by Krishna Dutta and Mary Lago, Macmillan, 1991.
- [8] Sarkar, Sumit. *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903–1908*. Permanent Black, 2010.
- [9] Sarkar, Tanika. "Nationalism and the Imagination." *The Oxford India Anthology of Modern Bengali Literature*, edited by Amit Chaudhuri, Oxford UP, 2002.